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N E W S C O N F E R E N C E

#134

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 11:40 A.M. EST

JANUARY 29, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. NESSEN: The President came in at 7:50 today, to the office.

He began meeting with the Cabinet at 11 o'clock. Jack Hushen is in the Cabinet meeting and will come out and give us a fill-in when the meeting is over.

The President will receive diplomatic credentials, also, this afternoon at 4 o'clock from the Ambassadors from the Democratic Republic of Sudan, the Dominican Republic, and the Republics of Bolivia and Equador. You have the names and biographies of the Ambassadors who will be presenting their credentials this afternoon. I guess there is coverage by cameras and film of that.

At 4:30 p.m., the President will hold a meeting of the National Security Council in the Cabinet Room.

So that you can plan ahead just a bit, I can give you some information on the briefing schedule and so forth for the budget and economic messages.

The briefing on the budget will be Saturday morning at 10 o'clock in the State Department auditorium. The briefing will be done by Roy Ash, and he will have some other people there from the OMB.

The idea is to have the material ready for you on Friday in Room 2108 of the New EOB. That is the red building up here on Seventeenth Street. The documents that we hope to have ready by late Friday are the budget document, itself, the budget in brief, the special analysis and the appendix.

I think some of you know that there was a bomb scare up at the New EOB, and Roy Ash said it threw their printing schedule a little off. It is possible that the special analysis may not quite be ready by Friday night. If it is not, at least it would be there on Saturday morning in time for the briefing.

MORE

#134

Q What time did you say Friday?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have a time, but we will get it for you before then so you can know when you can go pick them up.

Q Ron, is all this stuff for release on noon Monday?

MR. NESSEN: I was just going to say, the briefing on Saturday, as well as the documents, are embargoed for release at noon on Monday.

Q The wires have mentioned a time to pick them up from 4:30 to 5:00.

MR. NESSEN: I hope we have them ready by then.

The other matter is the economic message of the President and the annual report of the Council of Economic Advisers. That will go to Congress on Tuesday. The briefing on that will be at 4 o'clock Monday afternoon in Room 450 of the EOB. That is the auditorium over here.

Let me say, that is somewhat tentative because there is a possibility that those documents will not be ready in time. We have a printing problem, clearly. If there is a considerable delay in those documents, we have rescheduled the briefing for early Tuesday, but tentatively, we are going ahead with 4 o'clock Monday. If everything goes according to plan, you can get the message and the report at 1 o'clock on Monday, which would give you three hours to study it before the briefing.

Q Where do we get the documents?

MR. NESSEN: We will find that out for you.

The documents and the briefing on that is embargoed until noon on Tuesday.

Q Ron, what time is the departure for Atlanta?

MR. NESSEN: We don't have the exact schedule yet, Russ.

Q Is there going to be a conflict between that and the 4 o'clock briefing?

MR. NESSEN: It is highly likely that you will not be able to cover both, highly likely. Alan Greenspan and members of his staff will conduct the President's economic message and on the annual report of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Prime Minister Wilson of Great Britain is beginning his official visit to the United States tomorrow. There will be an arrival ceremony on the South Lawn. We don't have an exact time for you, but it will be in the schedule.

Q Is that going to be in the morning or the afternoon?

MR. NESSEN: I am told it is 10:30 a.m. There will be an official Oval Office meeting, and then, there will be a State dinner tomorrow night.

On Friday, Prime Minister Wilson and the President will meet again in the Oval Office. The President looks forward to this opportunity to review with the Prime Minister a number of matters of current interest, including bilateral affairs between the two countries, the Atlantic Alliance and East-West relations, as well as international financial and energy issues.

The Prime Minister's visit is an important part of the process of close and continuing consultation with America's friends and allies in Western Europe.

Tomorrow morning, the President is going to go to the National Prayer Breakfast at the Washington Hilton. We will have a travel pool to post later today, and we will also have the exact time and location.

Q Is he getting more religion than is good for him these days? (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q Is there open coverage for the National Prayer Breakfast?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure. I think it has been the custom not to have filmed coverage on that on the grounds that it is a religious ceremony.

Q It was the custom not to have it last year, but in previous years, they did have coverage. One of the reasons last year was that they did not like the coverage of the year before, so if this is going to be your policy, I think that is the history of it.

MR. NESSEN: I will have to look into that.

Q Remember the defamation of character? (Laughter.)

MR. NESSEN: The White House does not run the event, I am told, but let me look into it and see what can be worked out.

Basically, I don't have anymore announcements to make.

MORE

Q Ron, on another subject, I was wondering, what was the President's reaction to Senator Goldwater's rather electrifying prediction that Mr. Nixon could help the Republican Party by returning to the political arena?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't have any reaction, Les.

Q No reaction at all? He saw it; he knows about it?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q And he had no comment at all?

MR. NESSEN: Right.

Q Ron, what about the suggestion that Mary Louise Smith should be replaced, and is her absence in the Cabinet meeting significant?

MR. NESSEN: No, it was not significant. Senator Goldwater also raised some question about Mary Louise Smith continuing at the Republican National Committee. The President has confidence in her as the Chairman.

Q How about a clemency decision?

MR. NESSEN: A clemency decision I would expect tomorrow.

Q You didn't say why she was absent today. Do you know?

MR. NESSEN: No, but it had nothing to do with Senator Goldwater's suggestion. She may be traveling, but I can find out.

Q Ron, two or three days ago you were asked the question about the President's policy or the President's preference with regard to the disposition of FBI files on people who are dead.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q This, of course, goes one step further of the question of keeping them around in case people get appointed to things. Since we assume dead people don't get appointed to things, have you been able to find out what the President believes should be done with FBI material or reports or tape recordings of people who are now dead?

MR. NESSEN: For one thing, Jim, you have to find out from the Justice Department what files, if any, there are on some of the people you mentioned. Secondly, the Justice Department is in the process now of analyzing the problem of what to do with such files, if they exist, and they will send whatever recommendations they have to the President and he will see what they are and decide what to do about them.

Q Did you have a chance to ask the President his feeling on the other government agencies which keep files on Congressmen and Senators?

MR. NESSEN: I did, and I think I would answer the question this way: The President has taken a number of steps and said a number of things that deal with the question of whether various government agencies invade people's privacy improperly.

I guess primarily the President has stated on several occasions that he does not believe in spying on law abiding citizens, and he has, as you know, when he was Vice President, when he was in charge of the Privacy Commission, spoken out clearly on his views about privacy a number of times, so that is one.

Secondly, if you recall, he signed a bill which provides greater protection for people's tax returns. He has not done this, but we have mentioned here that the Justice Department does and will prosecute anybody who is found to be violating the law in regard to spying or infringing on people's privacy illegally.

The new Attorney General, when he is confirmed, will be reviewing all the policies of his department concerning domestic intelligence and recommend to the President any steps he thinks that need to be taken to correct anything that is wrong.

The President has appointed, as you know, a Commission to investigate domestic activities by the CIA.

The President has talked to the heads of agencies involved -- not at any formal meeting, but on occasion -- about his concern that there be complete compliance with all the laws relating to the gathering of intelligence about Americans. There will be, in the days ahead, some other steps that we will announce when the President has decided on them.

Also, on January 1, when the President signed the Privacy Act of 1974, he issued a statement, which we can provide you here in the press room, saying that when he was Chairman of the Council on Privacy he became increasingly aware of the vital need to provide adequate and uniform privacy safeguards for the vast amount of personal information collected, recorded and used in our society.

He said that his objective is to set the Federal house in order. He also said that he is disappointed that the provisions in that law for disclosing personal information by agencies had not been tightened. This statement and his public statements certainly should be read by agencies of the government as an indication to them of how he expects them to conduct themselves.

Q Ron, when did the President talk to the heads of agencies, and which ones did he talk to and what specifically did he say?

MR. NESSEN: As I said, Bob, it was not in any formal sense of calling them in here, but in the course of other business, he has referred to this.

Q Are you talking about the Defense Intelligence Agency and the --

MR. NESSEN: I will have to get you a rundown on who, at various times, he has talked to, but I don't want you to think that he has called them in here to reprimand them or issue new orders. It was in the course of normal contacts with these people when the subject came up that he indicated his views.

Mary Louise Smith is in the Cabinet meeting.

Q She is?

MR. NESSEN: That is what I am told. She may not have been in there when you went in for the photo, but she is there now.

MR. SPEAKES: She was there.

MR. NESSEN: She was there.

Maybe you didn't recognize her. Maybe she has a new hairdo. You probably thought she was a secretary because she is a woman.

Q Ron, to follow up on Bob's question, if I may, did the President instruct Dr. Levi to do this when he takes over the Justice Department, to review the entire domestic intelligence picture?

MR. NESSEN: He has talked, or the White House Counsel's office, at least, has talked to Dr. Levi about this.

Q Did they instruct him to do this, or did he volunteer that it should be done?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure in what form it was decided, but he will review.

Q Ron, what is the President's reaction to the new Senate committee that is going to investigate all these things? Does he welcome that?

MR. NESSEN: He feels that the committee has a responsibility to carry out, and he thinks it should carry it out and in a responsible way.

Q Ron, the question this morning came up in this episode of 40 cases of Coors beer that the Secret Service man stashed on the plane, and I am not so concerned about that as what I discover is that when Dr. Kissinger goes to the West Coast, he flies not only in one of the Air Force One planes, but another one goes along as the cargo ship. Now, I have asked, since this is the President's fleet, Air Force One, why is it that Dr. Kissinger --

MR. NESSEN: Wait a minute, it is not the President's fleet.

Q I mean, he is in charge of it isn't he, Air Force One?

MR. NESSEN: In the sense that he is in charge of the military of the United States.

Q Yes, sir. That is why I ask this question.

Why is it that Dr. Kissinger, when he goes -- I can recognize the necessity of an armored limousine, but why is it, when Dr. Kissinger goes to the West Coast, he cannot ride on the cargo ship along with the Secret Service rather than having his own special plane at considerable expense in this rather dilemma? Could you explain why he can't ride on this cargo plane, we need two planes for the Secretary of State?

MR. NESSEN: I think probably you would need to talk to the State Department.

Q Oh, Ron, that is an exercise in futility. You know that. Now, does the President want Dr. Kissinger to have two planes to fly to the West Coast to address a private audience?

MR. NESSEN: I think it is probably something you have to take up at the State Department and with the security people and with the air wing, whatever the exact title is at Andrews Air Force Base.

Q That is not a bad question. It really gets down to the point, how much --

MR. NESSEN: I am saying it is a perfectly legitimate question, and I think it needs to be addressed to the people who decide why there are two planes, if there are two planes. I don't know that there are two planes.

Q Oh, yes, they confirmed that, Ron.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there are, but if there are, the question needs to be taken to the people who know the reason; I don't.

Q Has the White House taken any steps to conserve energy at a time like this, when the public is being asked to save a few gallons a week? I mean, does it take two planes to take one man for a speech to the other coast?

MR. NESSEN: I think if there are two planes, Pete, and I don't know that there are --

Q This is conceded, recorded and admitted. I mean, on the second plane that was carrying the limousine is where the beer came in.

MR. NESSEN: We are mixing together Secretary Kissinger's recent flight to the West Coast with -- was the Secret Service man supposed to have brought the beer back on Kissinger's cargo plane?

Q Yes.

MR. NESSEN: Well, that would mean that there was a cargo plane, wouldn't it?

Q This is the Secret Service that confirmed this this morning, John Warner, a very honest and good man.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I am sure there is a reason.

Q There was a former President who once went by commercial airlines to save a little gas, and now, we have a Secretary of State who needs two planes to get to the West Coast. It is not a bad question.

MR. NESSEN: Has anybody had any luck talking to Bob Anderson about this, or Jack Warner, or the people at Andrews?

Q Mr. Warner referred it to you-know-where.

MR. NESSEN: To the State Department?

Q To here.

Q I think it is a matter of policy. Does the President encourage Cabinet officers to use two planes to fly to private meetings?

MR. NESSEN: You can be sure he does not encourage people to use two planes if one plane would be sufficient. There is clearly an explanation, and I suspect I know what it is, but I would rather not speak until I have had a chance to check on it. It is a legitimate question, and I will check on it.

Q Ron, does this round of meetings in Atlanta on Tuesday -- do any of those concern themselves with political leaders of Southern States? Does he plan to meet with them?

MR. NESSEN: I have not seen the final schedule for that, and I don't think the schedule has been locked up yet.

Q Ron, could I get back to the President's views on proper activities for intelligence gathering agencies? Do you have an expression of opinion from him, either on this specifically, or a general one, that would apply to it; that is, the story that was in the papers this morning about the FBI Counterintelligence Unit writing an anonymous letter to members of the Board of Regents of the University of Arizona, urging them to not rehire a professor for a variety of reasons associated with left-wing protest activities?

MR. NESSEN: I saw the story, and I don't want to either vouch for or deny its accuracy because I simply don't know. I think the only two things I can say are, one, as I have said before, this President is not responsible for what may or may not have happened before he came to office and, secondly, now that he is in office, he has made his views very clear, that he expects the government agencies to live up to the standards of conduct that he has spelled out in his own view.

Q In the views that he has spelled out, is there something that you see that applies to this?

MR. NESSEN: I certainly think that his views in terms of ethical and proper conduct for all the agencies of the government apply to that, if it did take place. It would apply to similar situations.

Q Ron, has the White House revised its estimate of how long the current recession may last in light of today's Commerce Department figures, which show the leading indicators are sagging badly?

MR. NESSEN: No. I talked to Al Greenspan this morning, and he believes that by midsummer we should see a turn.

Q By midsummer?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, which is what he has said all along.

Q Ron, is there going to be a press conference in Atlanta?

MR. NESSEN: The schedule for Atlanta is not locked up.

Q Ron, does the President have any meeting scheduled now with Members of Congress to work out some compromise on the energy and tax legislation?

MR. NESSEN: The compromise on the energy and tax measures?

Q No. The question was the debt ceiling and the 90-day extension of the tariff.

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure that he has invited a lot of members here for a formal conference. His legislative aides are in touch all the time up there.

Q But he is personally not doing anything?

MR. NESSEN: Not any sort of group meeting to sit down and talk about this.

Q How about a telephone call to Mr. Ullman?

MR. NESSEN: He does a fair amount of telephone calling.

Q Ron, this may have been asked, and if it has, then, I apologize, but has the President ordered the agencies, that the Senate committee is going to investigate, to give full cooperation, or is there going to be a question of Executive privilege at any point.

MR. NESSEN: Let me stop there a minute. Ted, you asked would anything the President say apply to this alleged case in the paper this morning. I found a note scribbled down a couple days ago, when I spoke to him, and I think it does apply. The President indicated then that he has communicated to the agencies, through these informal talks, that they should not violate the law, and more to your point, that he expects them to live up to his expectation, that they will act in an ethical way. I think that covers the point that you raised.

Bob asked me a question which I didn't answer.

Q Can you pursue that, please?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q The question was raised on Capitol Hill more than once by a number of Senators who questioned the basic collection and existence of files on them and Members of the Congress, Members of the House, by agencies other than the FBI. I was wondering whether the President is interested in that part?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that there is any evidence that other agencies have gathered files on Members of Congress.

Q Military intelligence has confirmed to certain Senators that they have folders on them. When these Senators have asked orally and in writing to see the folders, they have been refused permission.

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of that situation. I can look into it and see what, if anything, has taken place.

Q The question goes to the activity of the Senate investigating committee and whether the President has ordered the agencies that are to be investigated to cooperate fully, or whether Executive privilege will be allowed on occasions under these instructions?

MR. NESSEN: I have not heard any talk of Executive privilege. He does think the committee has a responsibility, and he hopes they are carried out in a responsible way. But I have not heard any talk about Executive privilege.

Q Has he ordered the agencies involved to cooperate with the committee?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that he has given that order. I think it is expected that when they are called upon by a responsible Congressional committee that they would respond.

MORE

Q Ron, Al Ullman has introduced -- and apparently the Democrats on the Ways and Means Committee will pass it -- a tax bill that will provide for a permanent cut in taxes rather than just a one-shot rebate.

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Does the President feel that that would be reckless or irresponsible or a wrong act? Do you have any views on that.

MR. NESSEN: The President is encouraged that Congress is finally moving on a tax cut, or seems to be. He wishes they were moving faster. He still believes that his tax cut plan, which calls for both a one-shot and permanent tax cut, is the best way. He is glad to see that Congressman Ullman apparently agrees with the President's basic thrust that a tax cut is needed now to stimulate the economy.

The President assumes that Congressman Ullman will include in his plan the same limits on government spending that the President has proposed to prevent a renewal of inflation when the recession is over. The President did consider a lot of different ways of going about these two tax cuts that he has proposed and concluded that what he has proposed is the best way.

Q That does not answer the question of whether the President feels that providing a permanent ongoing tax cut -- not just a one-shot deal, but for this year and years beyond -- is a dangerous thing to do, a wrong thing to do.

MR. NESSEN: He has proposed the same thing, so I don't see how you could say dangerous.

Q He did, Ron. He proposed it as an offset to higher energy fees, but this has nothing to do with that.

MR. NESSEN: That has only to do with the way the revenue is raised, but the effect is the same of giving everybody a permanent tax cut by cutting the rates and by weighting it very heavily in the direction of lower and middle income families.

Q Ron, the President proposed permanent tax cuts, that would be a wash with the higher energy fees?

MR. NESSEN: It would be financed by the revenues from the higher energy fees.

Q Mr. Ullman is proposing a permanent tax cut without reference to those higher energy fees. It would be a drain on the Treasury.

MR. NESSEN: As I say, the President feels his method is best.

Q What does he feel about Ullman's?

MR. NESSEN: I told you that he is glad that Ullman is moving, and wished that Ullman would move faster, and that Ullman apparently agrees with him that the one-shot tax cut is needed, as well as a permanent tax cut.

Q Ron, you are giving the impression, I think, that if they go ahead and approve permanent tax cuts without offsetting higher energy taxes, the President would be willing to accept that.

MR. NESSEN: Oh, I don't mean to give that impression.

Q If that is not the case, does he think that the permanent tax cut would be wrong?

MR. NESSEN: He has proposed one himself. I don't see how you can say they would be wrong.

Q What if they come without increased energy?

MR. NESSEN: The President thinks his plan is best, and he would like Congress to go ahead and move on it. Obviously, he said from the very beginning that there certainly can be some discussion of details.

Q Ron, has the President either personally or through his Congressional liaison staff offered to accept the 60- to 90-day freeze on his oil tariffs if they would allow his \$1 tariff on February 1 to go into effect?

MR. NESSEN: No. You know, all the talk yesterday about compromise and then your question again, and I don't know if I said it clearly enough yesterday, but the fact is that there is nothing at the moment to compromise with. There is a Presidential plan and no other plan, so how do you compromise two plans when there is only one plan?

Q There is a proposal to block it.

MR. NESSEN: Which I said yesterday, that he does not favor a 90-day delay. If you say, does he favor a 60-day delay, I would say no, also.

Q What if he gets his \$1 tariff on February 1?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. He is going to be --

Q He would be delayed an extra step.

MR. NESSEN: He is going to be talking to Members of Congress, if they care to avoid this confrontation, which everybody seemed to agree to yesterday, and I think they are the ones who will have to discuss this.

Q He has not offered to delay his second and third steps if they will give him his first step? That is my question.

MR. NESSEN: The answer is no.

Q Ron, in that same connection, Senator Griffin very strongly hinted this morning that that is precisely the shape of the compromise that is in the wind.

MR. NESSEN: I am not aware of any compromise in the wind, Jim.

Q You are not aware of any compromise in the wind?

MR. NESSEN: I am aware of the offer, or the willingness of both sides, to avoid a confrontation, but beyond that --

Q Are you aware of Griffin's statement?

MR. NESSEN: Not until you just told me about it.

Q Ron, two evenings ago, the Internal Revenue Service suspended a program indefinitely in which it had been securing information on private citizens, which the IRS said may not have been or may have been nontax related. In other words, the IRS seemed to concede, in its announcement of suspension, that some nontax related material was gathered.

Is the President aware of the reason for the IRS's suspension of this program, and does he see any continuing responsibility on the part of the IRS to report to him on its intelligence gathering?

MR. NESSEN: I have to check on that one. That is the first I have heard of that. I will have to look it up.

Bill.

Q Ron, a couple of questions on Vietnam aid. Senator Byrd came out after the bipartisan leadership meeting yesterday and indicated the President, in asking for this additional money, had said that the critical need for ammunition and materiel was such that the North Vietnamese would just keep nibbling away and that South Vietnam would probably go down the drain. I am wondering, if this is what the President meant to say to the leadership, number one and number two, what his reaction is to those who said that it would be awfully difficult to get enough votes to pass that bill --

MR. NESSEN: You know, I think you should read the message that the President sent to Congress yesterday with the proposal because it spells out very clearly why he thinks this is needed. He told the same thing to the Congressional leaders, that he is gravely concerned about the situation in Indochina and he believes that additional assistance to Vietnam and Cambodia is imperative and urgent and that it is in the interest of the United States.

One of the reasons he believes this aid is needed is that he thinks it is in the interest of the United States that the rest of the world know that the United States is a reliable ally which keeps its commitments and supports its friends when their survival is threatened by aggression.

Q Ron, don't you think the loss of 50,000 people and \$100 billion indicates that we have been rather loyal? Senators Thurmond and Scott the other day, right outside here, after speaking with the President, said all we need is \$1 billion next year and the year following until they bring in that oil well. How long does the President envisage asking for billions for Saigon?

MR. NESSEN: As Secretary Kissinger said in his news conference and, also, to the Congressional leaders, it does not seem to him or the President that this particular request is a matter of principle, or that this particular request is the occasion for reopening a debate on Vietnam, that what is really involved here is Congress authorized \$1 billion in aid for Vietnam this year, and the President at this point is simply asking that Congress go ahead and put up the remainder of the money that it authorized. It is not the occasion for a major policy debate on Vietnam. It is merely a request for the remainder of the money authorized by Congress.

Q Did the President, with the leaders, use that phrase, "go down the drain?"

MR. NESSEN: Let me just check my notes and see if he used that expression.

Q Does he feel the same way about Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: I think his message spells out clearly the seriousness of the situation in both countries.

Q Will he predict what will happen if the aid does not go through?

MR. NESSEN: I think the way that came out was, that he said that if the money was not put up and if in six months there was a disaster -- and that was the expression he used -- it would be a very traumatic experience for the American people, and he said the odds are in favor of a disaster if we don't do anything.

Q Would it be any more traumatic than the experience of the late 1960's, does he think?

MR. NESSEN: I am really simply quoting him. I think Secretary Kissinger's news conference, as well as the President's statement, do spell out clearly what their views are. The \$300 million, which is the remainder of the money Congress authorized, would not be enough to replace, on a one-for-one basis, the weapons and ammunition that the South Vietnamese have lost or expended.

The President does feel that the \$300 million would not be enough to replace weapons and ammunition on a one-for-one basis, as the treaty permits, but the President does believe that the \$300 million would be sufficient to preserve the South Vietnamese military situation.

Q Would you explain what he meant by "disaster?"

MR. NESSEN: No, he just used the expression, but again, the statement is pretty clear on what the outlook is.

Q Ron, to turn it around and look at it the other way, if the President gets the additional \$300 million that he wants, does he believe that this will be sufficient to see the light at the end of the tunnel in Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: Specifically -- not referring to your expression, Jim -- the President was asked nearly the very same question by John Chancellor, I think, or Tom, and I think you should see his answer, which is a clear statement of his views.

Q Ron, does the President or Secretary Kissinger have any idea how much longer we will be called on to furnish military support for South Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: I think that Secretary Kissinger talked about that point yesterday.

Q The only thing he said in his news conference is that he did not want to reopen the debate.

MR. NESSEN: Yes, that is right. He believes that this is not an occasion that requires the reopening of the debate.

Q But do you have an answer for that question?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have it in specific years or months, except what the President said on television the other night and what Secretary Kissinger said on occasion, which is that, clearly, there is no open-ended commitment, merely carrying out a commitment to help the South Vietnamese preserve their freedom and they have been fighting to preserve their freedom.

Q Senator Thurmond said that they were told by American officials in Saigon that they need at least three more years of American help before they can be self-sustaining. Have you heard those years used, that figure used?

MR. NESSEN: What he told the Congressional leaders meeting yesterday was that he had been told, in Saigon, that they thought two years would be enough but that there was an outside possibility of three years.

Q Ron, I am not quite clear. You quoted the President saying that if this money is not put out in six months it was a disaster?

MR. NESSEN: "If in six months there was a disaster --"

Q Then you quoted him saying, "The odds are in favor of a disaster, if you don't within six months?"

MR. NESSEN: No, he didn't put a time limit on the odds for disaster.

Q Ron, has the President made a decision on extending the Clemency Board?

MR. NESSEN: I think there will probably be a decision tomorrow on that.

Q Two things -- first, what does he mean when he says a "disaster?"

MR. NESSEN: He didn't spell it out, and I would rather not interpret his remarks.

Q Secondly -- I think on the President's schedule this afternoon there is a meeting with economic writers --

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q -- can you tell us who those people are and why he is meeting with them?

MR. NESSEN: He invited them in to talk to them. I don't have a complete list here. It is about eight or ten, I think.

Q Why did he invite them in?

MR. NESSEN: He wanted to see them. I guess it is the same reason he invited Saul Pett, Helen Thomas and so forth.

Q Is this a speech by him?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is a briefing by some of the economic and energy experts, and the President will probably drop in at some point.

Q Are these people who have not been exposed to this explanation before, or are they people here in Washington who are involved in that?

MR. NESSEN: Some are from here and some are from New York and some are from elsewhere in the country.

Q Why is he talking to them?

MR. NESSEN: I suppose for the same reason he wanted to talk to Saul Pett or Helen or Reasoner or Chancellor. Most of them had asked for separate interviews, and rather than do that, the President invited them to come in and sit down with the economic experts.

Q Ron, can we get a copy of the transcript?

MR. NESSEN: I will have to check. I don't even know that a transcript is going to be made.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (At 12:23 P.M. EST)

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#135

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH JACK HUSHEN

AT 12:55 P.M. EST

JANUARY 29, 1975

WEDNESDAY

MR. HUSHEN: This will be a brief report on this morning's Cabinet meeting. You already have the list of those who were attending.

The President opened the meeting by saying that he had two comments he wanted to make before they turned to the agenda. He said he wanted to make it very clear that the request sent to Congress yesterday for \$300 million in additional aid to Vietnam and \$220 million for Cambodia was a serious request and that the Administration would work very hard to see that it was enacted.

Secretaries Kissinger and Schlesinger also spoke briefly about how important it was for Congress to appropriate the funds.

The President talked briefly about his economic and energy plan, also about the importance of getting it enacted, and described it as a comprehensive proposal that will meet and solve the problems that are facing the Nation.

Let me give you one other quote. He said, in relationship to the request for more aid to Vietnam and Cambodia, "We can't be internationally minded in one part of the world and isolationist in another."

Q Where are we talking about?

MR. HUSHEN: I think he is talking about most of the rest of the world.

Q Have we been isolationists in Vietnam?

Q Is there any reason why we can't be?

MR. HUSHEN: He explained the importance of the Congress appropriating the \$300 million for Vietnam.

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#135

Q Was he referring to the Middle East?

MR. HUSHEN: I believe the Middle East, but not just the Middle East. This Nation has a very international posture. What he is saying is that we cannot, as I just said, be international in one place and not in all places.

Q I just didn't understand the first thing you said. Did he say that he supported the request or that the Administration supported it?

MR. HUSHEN: He wanted to make it clear that the Administration is fully supportive of the request.

Q The President wanted to make that clear to the Cabinet?

MR. HUSHEN: And I think through me to the public, in case there was any question in anybody's mind about any half-hearted attempts to get that appropriation through Congress.

Q Is there any question on why this had such a low news profile? The request was just sort of dropped in the box. There was no briefing. There was no statement by the President, and no one went on radio or television, no interviews, which normally happen.

MR. HUSHEN: No, I don't think it was designed for low profile. I mean, Secretary Kissinger had a press briefing yesterday. It was discussed at the bipartisan leadership meeting yesterday morning. I don't detect a low profile.

Q Was there some feeling in the Cabinet or elsewhere in the Administration that the request should not have been made? He said that he felt that he wanted to make it clear to the Administration.

MR. HUSHEN: No, I don't think so. He reads the newspapers and listens to the radio and television, and I think that he thought it might not have been clear.

Q Jack, was there any discussion in the Cabinet meeting of the possible passage by Congress of this appropriation?

MR. HUSHEN: No.

Q Did he have any reaction or say anything about the idea that Byrd said out here that they would not have enough votes for passage? They could not come up with enough votes to support its passage.

MR. HUSHEN: There was no discussion of the possibility of its passage. The stress was on the need to have it passed.

Q The Ford Administration, as I understand it, is ready to go to the mat with Congress over Vietnam and Cambodian aid in the face of an overwhelming rejection by Congress, is that correct?

MR. HUSHEN: You will have to put your interpretation on it. I am just telling you what the President said in the meeting this morning.

Q Jack, did the President ask any member of the Cabinet to do anything further to further the passage or to talk it up?

MR. HUSHEN: No, it was really not that kind of a discussion. As I said, these were just a couple of points that he wanted to make before they turned to the agenda of the day, which was primarily the budget, and that is the rest of this report.

Q Jack, on Vietnam aid in relation to the Middle East, was the argument made that if we have commitments out there, we renege on them, and then we cannot make commitments in any kind of Middle East peace settlement --

MR. HUSHEN: I am not going to go into all the details that were discussed.

Q -- by either Kissinger, Schlesinger or the President?

MR. HUSHEN: As I already said, Secretary Kissinger and Secretary Schlesinger did speak after the President spoke, but I am not going to go into all the details that were discussed in the meeting.

Q Well, I am not asking for all the details, just on this one detail. Do they tie up credibility commitments between Southeast Asia to the Middle East, Israel?

MR. HUSHEN: I will just stand on what the President said about --

Q Was the Middle East mentioned at all?

MR. HUSHEN: No.

Q Jack, how much of the hour and a half was devoted to the half billion dollars for South Vietnam?

MR. HUSHEN: The discussion of the Vietnam and Cambodian request and the energy-economic package probably took up maybe 15 minutes at the most. As I said, it was something that the President laid on top of the already scheduled agenda.

Q Just before you go beyond this, you said two points. Was one of them that he wanted to make it clear that the Administration fully supports the request and the second one, that we are going to try to get those requests enacted?

MR. HUSHEN: No, that is one point. The other point was the importance of the President's economic and energy proposals, the fact that the President has put forth his plan, the real need to get that plan enacted now to meet the growing problems that are facing this country, both economically and in energy.

Q One other point. Was the imminent possibility of a major oil find in South Vietnam part of this conversation?

MR. HUSHEN: It was not mentioned.

Q Finish your report.

MR. HUSHEN: Thanks, Ted.

The President mentioned the fact that this was the last Cabinet meeting for Attorney General Saxbe, Secretary Brinegar and Roy Ash, the Director of OMB. He said that he has been very pleased to serve with them and to have them in his Cabinet.

At the end of the meeting, and this I think is what delayed it somewhat, he called on each of them to say a few words, and they did. They talked generally about what they saw in each one of their areas, and they thought how effective the President was being, as President, in the job that he was doing.

Q Did he promise the others that they would be here at least through the next Cabinet meeting?

MR. HUSHEN: No, but Roy Ash predicted that the President would be in the same place two years hence, as he is today.

The President also discussed the White House Field Conferences. He mentioned the importance of them and encouraged the Cabinet officers to participate wherever possible, whenever they were able to do so.

Then the rest -- and this is by far the major part of the time -- was spent by Roy Ash giving the Cabinet officers a preview of what you all will be getting on Saturday and what the public will be getting on Monday.

He went into the new features -- I can't go into that because you are going to be getting it on Saturday. That is about the size of it.

Q Was Mary Louise Smith there?

MR. HUSHEN: Yes.

Q And did they discuss the Goldwater statement?

MR. HUSHEN: No.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Jack.

END (AT 1:05 P.M. EST)